GOD'S WORD
AND
GOD'S WORK
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God's Word and God's Work

By
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GOD'S WORD.

THAT the Bible is God's word and book I prove thus: All things that have been, and are, in the world, and the manner of their being, are described in the first book of Moses on the creation; even as God made and shaped the world, so does it stand to this day. Infinite potentates have raged against this book, and sought to destroy and uproot it—king Alexander the Great, the princes of Egypt and Babylon, the monarchs of Persia, of Greece, and of Rome, the emperors Julius and Augustus—but they nothing prevailed; they are all gone and vanished, while the book remains, and will remain for ever and ever, perfect and entire, as it was declared at the first. Who has thus helped it—who has thus protected it against such mighty forces? No one, surely, but God himself, who is the master of all things. And 'tis no small miracle how God has so long preserved and protected this book; for the devil and the

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world are sore foes to it. I believe that the devil has destroyed many good books of the church, as, aforetime, he killed and crushed many holy persons, the memory of whom has now passed away; but the Bible he was fain to leave subsisting. In like manner have baptism, the sacrament of the altar, of the true body and blood of Christ, and the office of preaching remained unto us, despite the infinitude of tyrants and heretic persecutors. God, with singular strength, has upheld these things; let us, then, baptize, administer the sacrament, and preach, fearless of impediment. Homer, Virgil, and other noble, fine, and profitable writers, have left us books of great antiquity, but they are nought to the Bible.

While the Romish church stood, the Bible was never given to the people in such a shape that they could clearly, understandingly, surely, and easily read it, as they now can in the translation, which, thank God, we have prepared.

The Holy Scriptures are full of divine gifts and virtues. The books of the heathen taught nothing of faith, hope, or charity; they present no idea of these things; they contemplate only the present, and that which man,

with the use of his material reason, can grasp and comprehend. Look not therein for aught of hope or trust in God. But see how the Psalms and the Book of Job treat of faith, hope, resignation, and prayer; in a word, the Holy Scripture is the highest and best of books, abounding in comfort under all afflictions and trials. It teaches us to see, to feel, to grasp, and to comprehend faith, hope, and charity, far otherwise than mere human reason can; and when evil oppresses us, it teaches how these virtues throw light upon the darkness, and how, after this poor, miserable existence of ours on earth, there is another and an eternal life.

We ought not to criticise, explain, or judge the Scriptures by our mere reason, but diligently, with prayer, meditate thereon, and seek their meaning. The devil and temptations also afford us occasion to learn and understand the Scriptures, by experience and practice. Without these we should never understand them, however diligently we read and listened to them. The Holy Ghost must here be our only master and tutor; and let youth have no shame to learn of that preceptor. When I find myself assailed by

temptation, I forthwith lay hold of some text of the Bible, which Jesus extends to me; as this: that he died for me, whence I derive infinite hope.

He who has made himself master of the principles and text of the word, runs little risk of committing errors. A theologian should be thoroughly in possession of the basis and source of faith—that is to say, the Holy Scriptures. Armed with this knowledge it was that I confounded and silenced all my adversaries; for they seek not to fathom and understand the Scriptures; they run them over negligently and drowsily; they speak, they write, they teach, according to the suggestion of their heedless imaginations. My counsel is, that we draw water from the true source and fountain, that is, that we diligently search the Scriptures. He who wholly possesses the text of the Bible, is a consummate divine. One single verse, one sentence of the text, is of far more instruction than a whole host of glosses and commentaries, which are neither strongly penetrating nor armor of proof. As, when I have that text before me of St. Paul: "All the creatures of God are good, if they be received with thanks-

giving," this text shows, that what God has made is good. Now eating, drinking, marrying, etc., are of God's making, therefore they are good. Yet the glosses of the primitive fathers are against this text: for Bernard, Basil, Jerome, and others, have written to far other purpose. But I prefer the text to them all, though, in popedom, the glosses were deemed of higher value than the bright and clear text.

Let us not lose the Bible, but with diligence, in fear and invocation of God, read and preach it. While that remains and flourishes, all prospers with the state; 'tis head and empress of all arts and faculties. Let but divinity fall, and I would not give a straw for the rest.

The Holy Scriptures surpass in efficaciousness all the arts and all the sciences of the philosophers and jurists; these, though good and necessary to life here below, are vain and of no effect as to what concerns the life eternal. The Bible should be regarded with wholly different eyes from those with which we view other productions. He who wholly renounces himself, and relies not on mere

human reason, will make good progress in the Scriptures; but the world comprehends them not, from ignorance of that mortification which is the gift of God's word. Can he who understands not God's word, understand God's works? This is manifest in Adam: he called his first-born son, Cain—that is, possessor, house-lord; this son, Adam and Eve thought, would be the man of God, the blessed seed that would crush the serpent's head. Afterwards, when Eve was with child again, they hoped to have a daughter, that their beloved son, Cain, might have a wife; but Eve, bearing again a son, called him Abel —that is, vanity and nothingness; as much as to say, my hope is gone, and I am deceived. This was an image of the world and of God's church, showing how things have ever gone. The ungodly Cain was a great lord in the world, while Abel, that upright and pious man, was an outcast, subject and oppressed. But before God, the case was quite contrary; Cain war rejected of God, Abel accepted and received as God's beloved child. The like is daily seen here on earth, therefore let us not heed its doings. Ishmael's was also a fair name—*hearer of God*—while Isaac's was naught. Esau's name means *actor*, the man

that shall do the work—Jacob's was naught. The name Absalom, signifies *father of peace*. Such fair and glorious colors do the ungodly ever bear in this world, while in truth and deed they are contemners, scoffers, and rebels to the word of God. But by that word, we, God be praised, are able to discern and know all such; therefore let us hold the Bible in precious esteem, and diligently read it.

To world wisdom, there seems no lighter or more easy art than divinity, and the understanding of God's word, so that the children of the world will be reputed fully versed in the Scriptures and catechism, but they shoot far from the mark. I would give all my fingers, save three to write with, could I find divinity so easy and light as they take it to be. The reason why men deem it so is, that they become soon wearied, and think they know enough of it. So we found it in the world, and so we must leave it.

I have grounded my preaching upon the literal word; he that pleases may follow me; he that will not may stay. I call upon St. Peter, St. Paul, Moses, and all the Saints, to say whether they ever fundamentally comprehended one single word of God, without

studying it over and over and over again. The Psalm says: *His understanding is infinite.* The saints, indeed, know God's word, and can discourse of it, but the practice is another matter; therein we shall ever remain scholars.

The school theologians have a fine similitude hereupon, that it is as with a sphere or globe, which, lying on a table, touches it only with one point, yet it is the whole table which supports the globe. Though I am an old doctor of divinity, to this day I have not got beyond the children's learning—the Ten Commandments, the Belief, and the Lord's Prayer; and these I understand not so well as I should, though I study them daily, praying, with my son John and my daughter Magdalen. If I thoroughly appreciate these first words of the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father, which art in Heaven*, and really believed that God, who made heaven and earth, and all creatures, and has all things in his hand, was my Father, then I should certainly conclude with myself, that I also am a lord of heaven and earth, that Christ is my brother, Gabriel my servant, Raphael my coachman, and all the angels my attendants at need, given unto me by my heavenly Father, to keep me in the path,

that unawares I knock not my foot against a stone. But that our faith may be exercised and confirmed, our heavenly Father suffers us to be cast into dungeons, or plunged in water. So we may see how finely we understand these words, and how belief shakes, and how great our weakness is, so that we begin to think—Ah, who knows how far that is true which is set forth in the Scriptures?

No greater mischief can happen to a Christian people, than to have God's word taken from them, or falsified, so that they no longer have it pure and clear. God grant we and our descendants be not witnesses of such a calamity.

When we have God's word pure and clear, then we think ourselves all right; we become negligent, and repose in a vain security; we no longer pay due heed, thinking it will always so remain; we do not watch and pray against the devil, who is ready to tear the Divine word out of our hearts. It is with us as with travellers, who, so long as they are on the highway, are tranquil and heedless, but if they go astray into woods or cross paths, uneasily seek which way to take, this or that.

The great men and the doctors understand not the word of God, but it is revealed to the humble and to children, as is testified by the Saviour in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, xi. 25: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Gregory says, well and rightly, that the Holy Scripture is a stream of running water, where alike the elephant may swim, and the lamb walk without losing its feet.

The great unthankfulness, contempt of God's word, and wilfulness of the world, make me fear that the divine light will soon cease to shine on man, for God's word has ever had its certain course.

In the time of the kings of Judah, Baal obscured the brightness of God's word, and it became hard labor to destroy his empire over the hearts of men. Even in the time of the apostles, there were heresies, errors, and evil doctrines spread abroad by false brethren. Next came Arius, and the word of God was hidden behind dark clouds, but the holy fathers, Ambrose, Hilary, Augustin, Athanasius, and others, dispersed the obscurity. Greece and many other countries have heard

the word of God, but have since abandoned it, and it is to be feared even now it may quit Germany, and go into other lands. I hope the last day will not be long delayed. The darkness grows thicker around us, and godly servants of the Most High become rarer and more rare. Impiety and licentiousness are rampant throughout the world, and we live like pigs, like wild beasts, devoid of all reason. But a voice will soon be heard thundering forth: *Behold, the bridegroom cometh.* God will not be able to bear this wicked world much longer, but will come, with the dreadful day, and chastise the scorners of His word.

Oh! how great and glorious a thing it is to have before one the Word of God! With that we may at all times feel joyous and secure; we need never be in want of consolation, for we see before us, in all its brightness, the pure and right way. He who loses sight of the word of God, falls into despair; the voice of heaven no longer sustains him; he follows only the disorderly tendency of his heart, and of world vanity, which lead him on to his destruction.

Christ, in Matthew, v., vi., vii., teaches briefly these points: first, as to the eight happinesses or blessings, how every Christian ought particularly to live as it concerns himself; secondly, of the office of teaching, what and how a man ought to teach in the church, how to season with salt and enlighten, reprove, and comfort, and exercise the faith; thirdly, he confutes and opposes the false expounding of the law; fourthly, he condemns the wicked hypocritical kind of living; fifthly, he teaches what are upright and good works; sixthly, he warns men of false doctrine; seventhly, he clears and solves what might be found doubtful and confused; eighthly, he condemns the hypocrites and false saints, who abuse the precious word of grace.

St. Luke describes Christ's passion better than the rest; John is more complete as to Christ's works; he describes the audience, and how the cause was handled, and how they proceeded before the seat of judgment, and how Christ was questioned, and for what cause he was slain.

When Pilate asked him: "Art thou the king of the Jews?" "Yea," said Christ, "I am; but not such a king as the emperor is,

for then my servants and armies would fight and try to deliver and defend me; but I am a king sent to preach the gospel, and give record of the truth which I must speak." "What!" said Pilate, "art thou such a king, and hast thou a kingdom that consists in word and truth? then surely thou canst be no prejudice to me." Doubtless Pilate took our Saviour Christ to be a simple, honest, ignorant man, one perchance come out of a wilderness, a simple fellow, a hermit, who knew or understood nothing of the world, or of government.

In the writings of St. Paul and St. John is a surpassing certainty, knowledge, and *Plerophoria*. They write as if all they narrate had been already done before their eyes.

Christ rightly says of St. Paul, he shall be a chosen instrument and vessel unto me; therefore he was made a doctor, and therefore he spake so certainly of the cause. Whoso reads Paul may, with a safe conscience, build upon his words; for my part, I never read more serious writings.

St. John, in his gospel, describes Christ, that he is a true and natural man, *à priori*, from former time: "In the beginning was the word," and "Whoso honoreth me, the same

honoreth also the Father." But Paul describes Christ, á *posteriori et effectu*, from that which follows, and according to the actions or works, as, "They tempted Christ in the wilderness;" "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves," etc.

The book of Solomon's Proverbs is a fine book, which rulers and governors should diligently read, for it contains lessons touching God's anger, wherein governors and rulers should exercise themselves.

The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus preaches the law well, but he is no prophet. It is not the work of Solomon, any more than is the book of Solomon's Proverbs. They are both collections made by other people.

The third book of Esdras I throw into the Elbe; there are, in the fourth, pretty knacks enough; as, "The wine is strong, the king is stronger, women strongest of all; but the truth is stronger than all these."

The book of Judith is not a history. It accords not with geography. I believe it is a poem, like the legends of the saints, composed by some good man, to the end he might show how Judith, a personification of the Jews, as God-fearing people, by whom God is known

and confessed, overcame and vanquished Holofernes—that is, all the kingdoms of the world. 'Tis a figurative work, like that of Homer about Troy, and that of Virgil about Æneas, wherein is shown how a great prince ought to be adorned with surpassing valor, like a brave champion, with wisdom and understanding, great courage and alacrity, fortune, honor, and justice. It is a tragedy, setting forth what the end of tyrants is. I take the book of Tobit to be a comedy concerning women, an example for house-government. I am so great an enemy to the second book of the Maccabees, and to Esther, that I wish they had not come to us at all, for they have too many heathen unnaturalities. The Jews much more esteemed the book of Esther than any of the prophets; though they were forbidden to read it before they had attained the age of thirty, by reason of the mystic matters it contains. They utterly contemn Daniel and Isaiah, those two holy and glorious prophets, of whom the former, in the clearest manner, preaches Christ, while the other describes and portrays the kingdom of Christ, and the monarchies and empires of the world preceding it. Jeremiah comes but after them.

The discourses of the prophets were none of them regularly committed to writing at the time; their disciples and hearers collected them subsequently, one, one piece, another, another, and thus was the complete collection formed.

In the book of the Judges, the valiant champions and deliverers are described, who were sent by God, believing and trusting wholly in him, according to the first commandment; they committed themselves, their actions, and enterprises to God, and gave him thanks: they relied only upon the God of heaven and said: Lord God, thou hast done these things, and not we; to thee only be the glory. The book of the Kings is excellent—a hundred times better than the Chronicles, which constantly pass over the most important facts, without any details whatever.

The book of Job is admirable; it is not written only touching himself, but also for the comfort and consolation of all sorrowful, troubled, and perplexed hearts, who resist the devil. When he conceived that God began to be angry with him, he became impatient, and was much offended; it vexed and grieved him that the ungodly prospered so well,

therefore it should be a comfort to poor Christians that are persecuted and forced to suffer, that in the life to come, God will give unto them exceeding great and glorious benefits, and everlasting wealth and honor.

We need not wonder that Moses so briefly described the history of the ancient patriarchs, when we see that the Evangelists, in the shortest measure, describe the sermons in the New Testament, running briefly through them, and giving but a touch of the preachings of John the Baptist, which, doubtless, were the most beautiful.

Saint John speaks majestically, yet with very plain and simple words, as where he says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

See how he describes God the Creator, and also his creatures, in plain, clear language, as with a sunbeam. If one of our philosophers or high learned men had described them,

what wonderful swelling and high-trotting words would he have paraded, *de ente et essentiâ*, so that no man could have understood what he meant. 'Tis a great lesson, how mighty divine truth is, which presses through though she be hemmed in ever so closely; the more she is read, the more she moves and takes possession of the heart.

The psalms of David are of various kinds—didactic, prophetic, eucharistic, catechetic. Among the prophetic, we should particularly distinguish the 110th, *Dixit Dominus;* and among the didactic, the *Miserere Mei*, *De profundis*, and *Domine, exaudi orationem.* The 110th is very fine. It describes the kingdom and priesthood of Jesus Christ, and declares him to be the King of all things, and the intercessor for all men; to whom all things have been remitted by his Father, and who has compassion on us all. 'Tis a noble psalm; if I were well, I would endeavor to make a commentary on it.

Luther was asked whether the history of the rich man and Lazarus was a parable or an actual fact? He replied: the earlier part of the story is evidently historical; the persons,

the circumstances, the existence of the five brothers, all this is given in detail. The reference to Abraham is allogorical, and highly worthy of observation. We learn from it that there are abodes unknown to us, where the souls of men are; secrets into which we must not inquire. No mention is made of Lazarus' grave; whence we may judge, that in God's eyes, the soul occupies far more place than the body. Abraham's bosom is the promise and assurance of salvation, and the expectation of Jesus Christ; not heaven itself, but the expectation of heaven.

I have lived to see the greatest plague on earth—the contemning of God's word, a fearful thing, surpassing all other plagues in the world; for thereupon most surely follow all manner of punishments, eternal and corporal. Did I desire for a man all bitter plagues and curses, I would wish him the contemning of God's word, for he would then have them all at once come upon him, both inward and outward misfortunes. The contemning of God's word is the forerunner of God's punishments; as the examples witness in the times of Lot, of Noah, and of our Saviour.

The words of the Hebrew tongue have a peculiar energy. It is impossible to convey so much so briefly in any other language. To render them intelligibly, we must not attempt to give word for word, but only aim at the sense and idea. In translating Moses, I made it my effort to avoid Hebraisms; 'twas an arduous business. The wise ones, who affect greater knowledge than myself on the subject, take me to task for a word here and there. Did they attempt the labor I have accomplished, I would find a hundred blunders in them for my one.

Forsheim said that the first of the five books of Moses was not written by Moses himself. Luther replied: What matters it, even though Moses did not write it? It is, nevertheless, Moses's book, wherein is exactly related the creation of the world. Such futile objections as these should not be listened to.

In cases of religion and that concern God's Word, we must be sure and certain, without wavering, so that in time of trial and temptation their acknowledgment may be distinct, and we may not afterwards say, *Non putarem;* a course which in temporal matters often in-

volves much danger, but in divinity is doubly mischievous. Thus the canonists, the popish dissemblers, and other heretics, are right chimæras; in the face resembling a fair virgin, the body being like a lion, and the tail like a snake. Even so it is with their doctrine; it glitters, and has a fair aspect, and what they teach is agreeable to mortal wisdom and appreciation, and acquires repute. Afterwards, lion-like, it breaks through by force, for all false teachers commonly make use of the secular arm; but in the end, it shows itself a slippery doctrine, having, like a snake, a smooth skin, sliding through the hand.

Once sure that the doctrine we teach is God's Word, once certain of this, we may build thereupon, and know that this cause shall and must remain; the devil shall not be able to overthrow it, much less the world be able to uproot it, how fiercely soever it rage. I, God be praised, surely know that the doctrine I teach is God's Word, and have now hunted from my heart all other doctrines and faiths, of what name soever, that do not concur with God's Word. Thus have I overcome the heavy temptations that sometimes tormented me, thus: Art thou, asked the devilish thought within, the only man that

has God's Word, pure and clear, all others failing therein? For thus does Satan vex and assault us, under the name and title of God's church; what, says he, that doctrine which the Christian church has so many years held, and established as right, wilt thou presume to reject and overthrow it with thy new doctrine, as though it were false and erroneous, thereby producing trouble, alteration, and confusion, both in spiritual and temporal government?

I find this argument of the devil in all the prophets, whom the rulers, both in church and state, have ever upbraided, saying: We are God's people, placed and ordained by God in an established government; what we settle and acknowledge as right, that must and shall be observed. What fools are ye that presume to teach us, the best and largest part, there being of you but a handful? Truly, in this case, we must not only be well armed with God's Word, and versed therein, but must have also certainty of the doctrine, or we shall not endure the combat. A man must be able to affirm, I know for certain, that what I teach is the only Word of the high Majesty of God in heaven, his final conclusion and everlasting, unchangeable truth,

and whatsoever concurs and agrees not with this doctrine, is altogether false, and spun by the devil. I have before me God's Word which cannot fail, nor can the gates of hell prevail against it; thereby will I remain, though the whole world be against me. And withal, I have this comfort, that God says: I will give thee people and hearers that shall receive it; cast thy care upon me; I will defend thee, only remain thou stout and steadfast by my Word.

We must not regard what or how the world esteems us, so we have the Word pure, and are certain of our doctrine. Hence Christ, in John viii., "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me?" All the apostles were most certain of their doctrine; and St. Paul, in special manner, insists on the *Plerophoria*, where he says to Timothy: "It is a dear and precious word, that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners." The faith towards God in Christ must be sure and steadfast, that it may solace and make glad the conscience, and put it to rest. When a man has this certainty, he has overcome the serpent; but if he be doubtful of the doctrine, it is for him very dangerous to dispute with the devil.

A fiery shield is God's Word; of more substance and purer than gold, which, tried in the fire, loses nought of its substance, but resists and overcomes all the fury of the fiery heat; even so, he that believes God's Word overcomes all, and remains secure everlastingly, against all misfortunes; for this shield fears nothing, neither hell nor the devil.

Ah, how impious and ungrateful is the world, thus to contemn and persecute God's ineffable grace! And we—we ourselves—who boast of the gospel, and know it to be the God's Word, and recognize it for such, yet hold it in no more esteem and respect than we do Virgil or Terence. Truly, I am less afraid of the pope and his tyrants, than I am of our own ingratitude towards the Word of God: 'tis this will place the pope in his saddle again. But, first, I hope the day of judgment will come.

God has his measuring lines and his canons, called the Ten Commandments; they are written in our flesh and blood: the sum of them is: "What thou wouldest have done to thyself, the same do thou to another." God presses upon this point, saying: "Such meas-

ure as thou metest, the same shall be measured to thee again." With this measuring line has God marked the whole world. They that live and do thereafter, well it is with them, for God richly rewards them in this life.

Is it true that God speaks himself with us in the Holy Scriptures? thou that doubtest this, must needs think in thy heart that God is a liar, one that says a thing, and performs it not; but thou mayest be sure when he opens his mouth, it is as much as three worlds. God, with one sole word, moulded the whole world. In Psalm xxxiii, it is said: "When he speaketh, it is done; when he commandeth, it standeth fast."

We must make a great difference between God's Word and the word of man. A man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlastingly; we should, therefore, diligently study God's Word, and know and assuredly believe that God himself speaks unto us. This was what David saw and believed, who said: "God spake in his

holiness, thereof I am glad." We should also be glad; but this gladness is oftentimes mixed up with sorrow and pain, of which, again, David is an example, who underwent manifold trials and tribulations in connection with the murder and adultery he had committed. It was no honeymoon for him, when he was hunted from one place to another, to the end he might after remain in God's fear. In the second Psalm he says: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

Christ (Luke viii.) says, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." Here a man might ask, What mystery is that? If a mystery, why do ye preach it? Whereunto I answer: A mystery is a thing hidden and secret; the mysteries of the kingdom of God are such things as lie hidden in the kingdom of God; but he that knows Christ aright, knows what God's kingdom is, and what therein is to be found. They are mysteries, beause secret and hidden from human sense and reason, when the Holy Ghost does not reveal them; for though many hear of them, they neither conceive nor understand them. There are now many among us who preach of Christ, and hear much spoken

of him, as that he gave himself to death for us, but this lies only upon the tongue, and not in the heart; for they neither believe it, nor are sensible of it; as St. Paul says: "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Those on whom the Spirit of God falls, not only hear and see it, but also receive it within their hearts and believe, and therefore it is no mystery or secret to them.

'Twas a special gift of God that speech was given to mankind; for through the Word, and not by force, wisdom governs. Through the Word people are taught and comforted, and thereby all sorrow is made light, especially in cases of conscience. Therefore God gave to his church an eternal Word to hear, and the sacraments to use. But this holy function of preaching the Word is, by Satan, fiercely resisted; he would willingly have it utterly suppressed, for thereby his kingdom is destroyed.

Truly speech has wonderful strength and power, that through a mere word, proceeding out of the mouth of a poor human creature, the devil, that so proud and powerful spirit, should be driven away, shamed and confounded.

The sectaries are so impudent, that they dare to reject the word of the mouth; and to smooth their damnable opinions, say: No external thing makes one to be saved; the word of the mouth and the sacraments are external things: therefore they make us not to be saved. But I answer: We must discriminate wholly between the external things of God and the outward things of man. The external things of God are powerful and saving; it is not so with the outward things of man.

God alone, through his word, instructs the heart, so that it may come to the serious knowledge how wicked it is, and corrupt and hostile to God. Afterwards God brings man to the knowledge of God, and how he may be freed from sin, and how, after this miserable, evanescent world, he may obtain life everlasting. Human reason, with all its wisdom, can bring it no further than to instruct people how to live honestly and decently in the world, how to keep house, build, etc., things learned from philosophy and heathenish books. But how they should learn to know God and his dear Son, Christ Jesus, and to be saved, this the Holy Ghost alone teaches through God's word; for philosophy understands nought of divine matters. I don't say that men may

not teach and learn philosophy; I approve thereof, so that it be within reason and moderation. Let philosophy remain within her bounds, as God has appointed, and let us make use of her as of a character in a comedy; but to mix her up with divinity may not be endured; nor is it tolerable to make faith an *accidens* or quality, happening by chance; for such words are merely philosophical,—used in schools and in temporal affairs, which human sense and reason may comprehend. But faith is a thing in the heart, having its being and substance by itself, given of God as his proper work, not a corporal thing, that may be seen, felt or touched.

We must know how to teach God's word aright, discerningly, for there are divers sorts of hearers; some are struck with fear in the conscience, are perplexed, and awed by their sins, and, in apprehension of God's anger, are penitent; these must be comforted with the consolations of the gospel. Others are hardened, obstinate, stiff-necked, rebel-hearted; these must be affrighted by the law, by examples of God's wrath: as the fires of Elijah, the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the downfall of Jerusalem. These hard heads need sound knocks.

The gospel of the remission of sins through faith in Christ, is received of few people; most men little regard the sweet and comfortable tidings of the gospel; some hear it, but only even so as they hear mass in popedom; the majority attend God's word out of custom, and, when they have done that, think all is well. The case is, the sick, needing a physician, welcome him; but he that is well, cares not for him, as we see by the Canaanitish woman in Matthew xv., who felt her own and her daughter's necessities, and therefore ran after Christ, and in nowise would suffer herself to be denied or sent away from him. In like manner, Moses was fain to go before, and learn to feel sins, that so grace might taste the sweeter. Therefore, it is but labor lost (how familiar and loving soever Christ be figured unto us), except we first be humbled through the acknowledgment of our sins, and so yearn after Christ, as the *Magnificat* says: "He filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away," words spoken for the comfort of all, and for instruction of miserable, poor, needful sinners, and contemned people to the end that in all their deepest sorrows and necessities they may know with whom to take refuge and seek aid and consolation.

But we must take fast hold on God's Word, and believe all true which that says of God, though God and all his creatures should seem unto us other than as the Word speaks, as we see the Canaanitish woman did. The Word is sure, and fails not, though heaven and earth must pass away. Yet, oh! how hard is this to natural sense and reason, that it must strip itself naked, and abandon all it comprehends and feels, depending only upon the bare Word. The Lord of his mercy help us with faith in our necessities, and at our last end, when we strive with death.

Heaven and earth, all the emperors, kings and princes of the world, could not raise a fit dwelling-place for God; yet, in a weak human soul, that keeps his Word, he willingly resides. Isaiah calls heaven the Lord's seat, and earth his footstool; he does not call them his dwelling-place; when we seek after God, we shall find him with them that keep his Word. Christ says: "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Nothing could be simpler or clearer than these words of the Saviour, and yet he confounds herewith all the wisdom of

the worldly-wise. He sought to speak *non in sublimi sed humili genere.* If I had to teach a child, I would teach him in the same way.

Great is the strength of the divine Word. In the epistle to the Hebrews, it is called "a two-edged sword." But we have neglected and contemned the pure and clear Word, and have drunk not of the fresh and cool spring; we are gone from the clear fountain to the foul puddle, and drunk its filthy water; that is, we have sedulously read old writers and teachers, who went about with speculative reasonings, like the monks and friars.

The words of our Saviour Christ are exceeding powerful; they have hands and feet; they outdo the utmost subtleties of the worldly-wise, as we see in the gospel, where Christ confounds the wisdom of the Pharisees with plain and simple words, so that they knew not which way to turn and wind themselves. It was a sharp syllogism of his: "Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's;" herewith he neither commanded nor prohibited, but snared them in their own casuistry.

When God's preaches his word, then presently follows the cross to godly Christians;

as St. Paul testifies: "All that will live a godly life in Jesus Christ, must suffer persecution." And our Saviour: "The disciple is not greater than the master: have they persecuted me? they will persecute you also." The work rightly expounds and declares the Word, as the prophet Isaiah: Grief and sorrow teach us how to mark the Word. No man understands the Scriptures unless he be acquainted with the cross.

I admonish every pious Christian that he take not offence at the plain, unvarnished manner of speech of the Bible. Let him reflect that what may seem trivial and vulgar to him, emanates from the high majesty, power, and wisdom of God. The Bible is the book that makes fools of the wise of this world; it is understood only of the plain and simple-hearted. Esteem this book as the precious fountain than can never be exhausted. In it thou findest the swaddling-clothes and the manger whither the angels directed the poor, simple shepherds; they seem poor and mean, but dear and precious is the treasure that lies therein.

In the apostles' time, and in our own, the

gospel was and is preached more powerfully and spread further than it was in the time of Christ; for Christ had not such repute, nor so many hearers as the apostles had, and as now we have. Christ himself says to his disciples: Ye shall do greater works than I; I am but a little grain of mustard-seed; but ye shall be like the vine-tree, and as the arms and boughs wherein the birds shall build their nests.

All men now presume to criticise the gospel. Almost every old doting fool or prating sophist must, forsooth, be a doctor in divinity. All other arts and sciences have masters, of whom people must learn, and rules and regulations which must be observed and obeyed; the Holy Scripture only, God's word, must be subject to each man's pride and presumption; hence, so many sects, seducers, and offences.

GOD'S WORKS.

GOD'S WORKS.

ALL the works of God are unsearchable and unspeakable; no human sense can find them out; faith only takes hold of them without human power or aid. No mortal creature can comprehend God in his majesty, and therefore did he come before us in the simplest manner, and was made man, ay, sin, death, and weakness.

In all things, in the least creatures, and in their members, God's almighty power and wonderful works clearly shine. For what man, how powerful, wise, and holy soever, can make out of one fig a fig-tree, or another fig? or, out of one cherry-stone, a cherry, or a cherry-tree? or what man can know how God creates and preserves all things, and makes them grow.

Neither can we conceive how the eye sees, or how intelligible words are spoken plainly, when only the tongue moves and stirs in the mouth; all which are natural things, daily

seen and acted. How then should we be able to comprehend or understand the secret counsels of God's majesty, or search them out with our human sense, reason, or understanding. Should we then admire our own wisdom? I, for my part, admit myself a fool, and yield myself captive.

In the beginning, God made Adam out of a piece of clay, and Eve out of Adam's rib: he blessed them, and said: "Be fruitful and increase"—words that will stand and remain powerful to the world's end. Though many people die daily, yet others are ever being born, as David says in his psalm: "Thou sufferest men to die and go away like a shadow, and sayest, Come again ye children of men." These and other things which he daily creates, the ungodly blind world see not, nor acknowledge for God's wonders, but think all is done by chance and haphazard, whereas, the godly, wheresoever they cast their eyes, beholding heaven and earth, the air and water, see and acknowledge all for God's wonders; and, full of astonishment and delight, laud the Creator, knowing that God is well pleased therewith.

For the blind children of the world the ar-

ticles of faith are too high. That three persons are one only God; that the true Son of God was made man; that in Christ are two natures, divine and human, etc., all this offends them, as fiction and fable. For just as unlikely as it is to say, a man and a stone are one person, so it is unlikely to human sense and reason that God was made man, or that divine and human natures, united in Christ, are one person. St. Paul showed his understanding of this matter, though he took not hold of all, in Colossians: "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Also: "In him lies hid all treasure of wisdom and knowledge."

If a man ask, Why God permits that men be hardened, and fall into everlasting perdition? let him ask again: Why God did not spare his only Son, but gave him for us all, to die the ignominious death of the cross, a more certain sign of his love towards us poor people, than of his wrath against us. Such questions cannot be better solved and answered than by converse questions. True, the malicious devil deceived and seduced Adam; but we ought to consider that, soon after the fall, Adam received the promise of the woman's

seed that should crush the serpent's head, and should bless the people on earth. Therefore, we must acknowledge that the goodness and mercy of the Father, who sent his Son to be our Saviour, is immeasurably great towards the wicked ungovernable world. Let, therefore, his good will be acceptable unto thee, oh, man, and speculate not with thy devilish queries, thy whys and thy wherefores, touching God's words and works. For God, who is creator of all creatures, and orders all things according to his unsearchable will and wisdom, is not pleased with such questionings.

Why God sometimes, out of his divine counsels, wonderfully wise, unsearchable to human reason and understanding, has mercy on this man, and hardens that, it beseems not us to inquire. We should know, undoubtingly, that he does nothing without certain cause and counsel. Truly, if God were to give an account to every one of his works and actions, he were but a poor, simple God.

Our Saviour said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Hereafter, then, we shall know how graciously our loving God and Father has been affected unto us. In the meantime, though misfortune, misery, and trouble be

upon us, we must have this sure confidence in him, that he will not suffer us to be destroyed either in body or soul, but will so deal with us, that all things, be they good or evil, shall redound to our advantage.

God is upright, faithful, and true, as he has shown, not only in his promises, through Christ, of forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from everlasting death, but also, in that he has laid before us, in the Scriptures, many gracious and comforting examples of great and holy saints, who of God were highly enlightened and favored, and who, notwithstanding, fell into great and heavy sins.

Adam, by his disobedience, hereditarily conveyed sin and death upon all his posterity. Aaron brought a great sin upon Israel, insomuch that God would have destroyed her. David also fell very heavily. Job and Jeremiah cursed the day wherein they were born. Jonas was sorely vexed, because Nineveh was not destroyed. Peter denied, Paul persecuted Christ.

These and such like innumerable examples does Holy Writ relate to us; not that we should live securely, and sin, relying upon the mercy of God, but that, when we feel

his anger, "which will surely follow upon the sins," we should not despair, but remember these comfortable examples, and thence conclude, that, as God was merciful unto them, so likewise he will be gracious unto us, out of his mere goodness and mercy shown in Christ, and will not impute our sins unto us.

We may also see by such examples of great holy men falling so grievously, what a wicked, crafty, and envious spirit the devil is, a very prince and god of the world.

These high, divine people, who committed such heavy sins, fell, through God's counsel and permission, to the end they should not be proud or boast themselves of their gifts and qualities, but should rather fear. For, when David had slain Uriah, had taken from him his wife, and thereby given cause to God's enemies to blaspheme, he could not boast he had governed well, or shown goodness; but he said: "I have sinned against the Lord," and with tears prayed for mercy. Job also acknowledgingly says: "I have spoken foolishly, and therefore do I accuse myself, and repent."

When God contemplates some great work,

he begins it by the hand of some poor, weak, human creature, to whom he afterwards gives aid, so that the enemies who seek to obstruct it, are overcome. As when he delivered the children of Israel out of the long, wearisome, and heavy captivity in Egypt, and led them into the land of promise, he called Moses, to whom he afterwards gave his brother Aaron as an assistant. And though Pharaoh at first set himself hard against them, and plagued the people worse than before, yet he was forced in the end to let Israel go. And when he hunted after them with all his host, the Lord drowned Pharaoh with all his power in the Red Sea, and so delivered his people.

Again, in the time of Eli the priest, when matters stood very evil in Israel, the Philistines pressing hard upon them, and taking away the Ark of God into their land, and when Eli, in great sorrow of heart, fell backwards from his chair and broke his neck, and it seemed as if Israel were utterly undone, God raised up Samuel the prophet, and through him restored Israel, and the Philistines were overthrown.

Afterwards, when Saul was sore pressed by the Philistines, so that for anguish of heart he despaired and thrust himself through,

three of his sons and many people dying with him, every man thought that now there was an end of Israel. But shortly after, when David was chosen king over all Israel, then came the golden time. For David, the chosen of God, not only saved Israel out of the enemies' hands, but also forced to obedience all kings and people that set themselves against him, and helped the kingdom up again in such manner, that in his and Solomon's time it was in full flourish, power, and glory.

Even so, when Judah was carried captive to Babylon, then God selected the prophets Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zachariah, who comforted men in their distress and captivity; making not only promise of their return into the land of Judah, but also that Christ should come in his due time.

Hence we may see that God never forsakes his people, nor even the wicked; though, by reason of their sins, He suffer them a long time to be severely punished and plagued.

How should God deal with us? Good days we cannot bear, evil we cannot endure. Gives he riches unto us? then are we proud, so that no man can live by us in peace; nay, we will be carried upon heads and shoulders, and

will be adored as gods. Gives he poverty unto us? then are we dismayed, impatient, and murmur against him. Therefore, nothing were better for us, than forthwith to be covered over with the shovel.

God deals strangely with his saints, contrary to all human wisdom and understanding, to the end, that those who fear God and are good Christians, may learn to depend on invisible things, and through mortification may be made alive again; for God's Word is a light that shines in a dark place, as all examples of faith show. Esau was accursed, yet it went well with him; he was lord in the land, and priest in the church; but Jacob had to fly, and dwell in poverty in another country.

God deals with godly Christians much as with the ungodly, yea, and sometimes far worse. He deals with them even as a house-father with a son and a servant; he whips and beats the son much more and oftener than the servant, yet, nevertheless, he gathers for the son a treasure to inherit, while a stub-born and a disobedient servant he beats not with the rod, but thrusts out of doors, and gives him nothing of the inheritance.

God is a good and gracious Lord; he will be held for God only and alone, according to the first commandment: "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." He desires nothing of us, no taxes, subsidies, money, or goods; he only requires that he may be our God and Father, and therefore he bestows upon us, richly with an overflowing cup, all manner of spiritual and temporal gifts; but we look not so much as once towards him, nor will have him to be our God.

God only, and not wealth, maintains the world; riches merely make people proud and lazy. At Venice, where the richest people are, a horrible dearth fell among them in our time, so that they were driven to call upon the Turks for help, who sent twenty-four galleys laden with corn; all which, well nigh in port, sunk before their eyes. Great wealth and money cannot still hunger, but rather occasion more dearth; for where rich people are, there things are always dear. Moreover, money makes no man right merry, but much rather pensive and full of sorrow; for riches, says Christ, are thorns that prick people. Yet is the world so mad that it sets therein all its joy and felicity.

There is no greater anger than when God is silent, and talks not with us, but suffers us to go on in our sinful works, and to do all things according to our own passions and pleasure; as it has been with the Jews for the last fifteen hundred years.

Ah, God, punish, we pray thee, with pestilence and famine and with what evil and sickness may be else on earth; but be not silent, Lord, toward us. God said to the Jews: "I have stretched forth mine hand, and have cried, come hither and hear," etc. "But ye said, We will not hear."

Even so likewise do we now; we are weary of God's word; we will not have upright, good, and godly preachers and teachers that threaten us, and bring God's word pure and unfalsified before us, and condemn false doctrine, and truly warn us. No, such we cannot endure, we will not hear them; nay, we persecute and banish them; therefore will God also punish us. Thus it goes with wicked and lost children, that will not hearken to their parents, nor be obedient unto them; they will afterwards be rejected of them again.

We are nothing worth with all our gifts and qualities, how great soever they be, un-

less God continually hold his hand over us: if he forsake us, then are our wisdom, art, sense, and understanding futile. If he do not constantly aid us, then our highest knowledge and experience in divinity, or what else we attain unto, will nothing serve; for when the hour of trial and temptation comes, we shall be despatched in a moment, the devil, through his craft and subtilty, tearing away from us even those texts in Holy Scripture wherewith we should comfort ourselves, and setting before our eyes, instead, only sentences of fearful threatening.

Wherefore, let no man proudly boast and brag of his own righteousness, wisdom, or other gifts and qualities, but humble himself, and pray with the holy apostles, and say: Ah, Lord! strengthen and increase the faith in us!

The greater God's gifts and works, the less are they regarded. The highest and most precious treasure we receive of God is, that we can speak, hear, see, etc.; but how few acknowledge these as God's special gifts, much less give God thanks for them. The world highly esteems riches, honor, power, and other things of less value, which soon

vanish away, but a blind man, if in his right wits, would willingly exchange all these for sight. The reason why the corporal gifts of God are so much undervalued is, that they are so common, that God bestows them also upon brute beasts, which as well as we, and better, hear and see. Nay, when Christ made the blind to see, drove out devils, raised the dead, etc., he was upraided by the ungodly hypocrites, who gave themselves out for God's people, and was told that he was a Samaritan, and had a devil. Ah! the world is the devil's, whether it goes or stands still; how then, can man acknowledge God's gifts and benefits? It is with us as with young children, who regard not so much their daily bread, as an apple, a pear, or other toys. Look at the cattle going into the fields to pasture, and behold in them our preachers, our milk-bearers, butter-bearers, cheese and wool-bearers, which daily preach unto us faith in God, and that we should trust in him, as in our loving Father, who cares for us, and will maintain and nourish us.

The apparent cause why God passed so sharp a sentence upon Adam, was, that he had eaten of the forbidden tree, and was dis-

obedient unto God, wherefore, for his sake, the earth was cursed, and mankind made subject to all manner of miseries, fears, wants, sicknesses, plagues, and death. The reason of the worldly-wise, regarding only the biting of the apple, holds that for so slight and trivial a thing it was too cruel and hard a proceeding upon poor Adam, and takes snuff in the nose, and says, or at least thinks: O, is it then so heinous a matter and sin for one to eat an apple? As people say of many sins that God expressly in his word has forbidden, such as drunkenness, etc.: What harm for one to be merry, and take a cup with good fellows?—concluding, according to their blindness, that God is too sharp and exacting.

Again, these worldlings are offended that Christ, as they think, rejects good, honest, and holy people; that he will not know them, is harsh to them, sends them away from him, and calls them malefactors, though some in his name have prophesied, cast out devils, done miracles, etc., while, on the other hand, he receives public sinners, as strumpets, knaves, publicans, murderers, whom, if they hear his word, and believe in him, he forgives, be their sins ever so great and many, yea, makes them righteous and holy, God's chil-

dren, and heirs of everlasting life and salvation, out of mere grace and mercy, without any deserts, good works, and worthiness of theirs. This they conceive to be altogether unjust.

Who can be here an arbitrator, the two things being as contrary to each other as fire and water. Herein man's wisdom, his sense, reason, understanding, is made a fool. The Scripture says: "Except ye be converted, and become like little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." They who would investigate these things with human wit and wisdom, give themselves much futile labor and disquiet; they will never learn how God is inclined towards them. In those, also, who so vainly trouble themselves, whether they be predestinated or forechosen, there goes up a fire in the heart, which they cannot quench; so that their consciences are never at peace, but in the end they must despair. He, therefore, that will shun this enduring evil must hold fast the Word, where he will find that our gracious God has laid a sure and strong foundation, on which we may with certainty take footing—namely, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom only we must enter into the kingdom of heaven; for he, and no other, "is the way, the truth, and the life."

We can understand the heavy temptations of that everlasting predestination, which terrifies many people, nowhere better than from the wounds of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, of whom the Father commanded, saying: "Him shall ye hear." But the wise of the world, the mighty, the high-learned, and the great, by no means heed these things, so that God remains unknown to them, notwithstanding they have much learning, and dispute and talk much of God; for it is a short conclusion: Without Christ, God will not be found, known, or comprehended.

If now thou wilt know, why so few are saved, and so infinitely many damned, this is the cause: the world will not hear Christ; they care nothing for him, yea, contemn that which the Father testifies of him: "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Whereas all people that seek and labor to come to God, through any other means than only through Christ (as Jews, Turks, Papists, false saints, heretics, etc.), walk in horrible darkness and error; and it helps them nothing that they lead an honest, sober kind of life, affect great devotion, suffer much, love and honor God, as they boast, etc. For seeing

they will not hear Christ, or believe in him (without whom no man knows God, no man obtains forgiveness of sins, no man comes to the Father), they remain always in doubt and unbelief, know not how they stand with God, and so at last must die, and be lost in their sins. For, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father." (1 John ii.) "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him." (John iii.)

It is often asked: Why desperate wretches have such good days, and live a long time in jollity and pleasure, to their heart's desire, with health of body, fine children, etc., while God allows the godly to remain in calamity, danger, anguish, and want all their lives; yea, and some to die also in misery, as St. John the Baptist did, who was the greatest saint on earth, to say nothing of our only Saviour Jesus Christ.

The prophets have all written much hereof, and shown how the godly should overcome such doubts, and comfort themselves against them. Jeremiah says: "Why goeth it so well with the ungodly, and wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" But further on, "Thou sufferest them to go at

liberty like sheep that are to be slain, and thou preparest them for the day of slaughter." Read also Psalms xxxvii., xlix, lxxiii.

God is not therefore angry with his children, though he scourge and punish them; but he is angry with the ungodly that do not acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, but blaspheme and contemn the Word; such are to expect no grace and help of him. And, indeed, he does not himself scourge and beat his small and poor flock that depend on Christ; but suffers them to be chastened and beaten, when they become over-secure and unthankful unto him for his unspeakable graces and benefits shown unto them in Christ, and are disobedient to his word; then permits he that the devil bruise our heels, and send pestilence and other plagues unto us; and that tyrants persecute us, and this for our good, that thereby we may be moved, and in a manner forced to turn ourselves unto him, to call upon him, to seek help and comfort from him, through Christ.

"God is a God of the living, and not of the dead." This text shows the resurrection; for if there were no hope of the resurrection, or of another and better world, after this short

and miserable life, wherefore should God offer himself to be our God, and say he will give us all that is necessary and healthful for us, and, in the end, deliver us out of all trouble, both temporal and spiritual? To what purpose should we hear his Word, and believe in him? What were we the better when we cry and sigh to him in our anguish and need, that we wait with patience upon his comfort and salvation, upon his grace and benefits, shown in Christ? Why praise and thank him for them? Why be daily in danger, and suffer ourselves to be persecuted and slain for the sake of Christ's Word?

Forasmuch as the everlasting, merciful God, through his word and sacraments, talks and deals with us, all other creatures excluded, not of temporal things which pertain to this vanishing life, and which in the beginning he provided richly for us, but as to where we shall go when we depart hence, and gives unto us his Son for a Saviour, delivering us from sin and death, and purchasing for us everlasting righteousness, life, and salvation, therefore it is most certain, that we do not die away like the beasts that have no understanding; but so many of us as sleep in Christ, shall through Him be

raised again to life everlasting at the last day, and the ungodly to everlasting destruction. (John v., Dan. xii.)

The most acceptable service we can do and show unto God, and which alone he desires of us, is, that he be praised of us; but he is not praised, unless he be first loved; he is not loved, unless he be first bountiful and does well; he does well when he is gracious; gracious he is when he forgives sins. Now who are those that love him? They are that small flock of the faithful, who acknowledge such graces, and know that through Christ they have forgiveness of their sins. But the children of this world do not trouble themselves herewith; they serve their idol, that wicked and cursed Mammon: in the end he will reward them.

God will have his servants to be repenting sinners, standing in fear of his anger, of the devil, death and hell, and believing in Christ. David says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and helpeth them that be of an humble spirit." And Isaiah, "Where shall my Spirit rest, and where shall I dwell? By them that are of humble spirit, and that

stand in fear of My Word." So with the poor sinner on the cross. So with St. Peter, when he had denied Christ; with Mary Magdalen; with Paul the persecutor, etc. All these were sorrowful for their sins, and such shall have forgiveness of their sins, and be God's servants.

The great prelates, the puffed up saints, the rich usurers, the ox drovers that seek unconscionable gain, etc., these are not God's servants, neither were it good they should be; for then no poor people could have access to God for them; neither were it for God's honor that such should be his servants, for they would ascribe the honor and praise to themselves.

In the Old Testament, all the first-born were consecrated to God, both of mankind and of beasts. The first-born son had an advantage over his brethren; he was their lord, as the chief in offerings and riches, that is, in spiritual and temporal government; for he had a right to the priesthood and dominion, etc. But there are many examples in Holy Scriptures, where God rejected the first-born, and chose the younger brethren, as Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, etc., who were first born; from them God took their

right, and gave it to their younger brethren, as to Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, etc. And for this cause: That they were haughty, proud, and presuming on their first-birth, and despised their brethren, that were more goodly and godly than they; this God could not endure, and therefore they were bereaved of their honors, so that they could not boast themselves of their prior birth, although they were highly esteemed in the world, and were possessed of lands and people.

The Scriptures show two manner of sacrifices acceptable to God. The first is called a sacrifice of thanks or praise, and is when we teach and preach God's Word purely, when we hear and receive it with faith, when we acknowledge it, and do everything that tends to the spreading of it abroad, and thank God from our hearts for the unspeakable benefits which through it are laid before us, and bestowed upon us in Christ, when we praise and glorify him, etc. "Offer unto God thanksgiving." "He that offereth thanks praiseth me." "Thank the Lord, for he is gracious, because his mercy endureth for ever." "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."—Psalms.

Secondly, when a sorrowful and troubled heart in all manner of temptations has his refuge in God, calls upon him in a true and upright faith, seeks help of him, and waits patiently upon him. Hereof the Psalms, "In my trouble I called upon the Lord, and he heard me at large." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and will save such as be of an humble spirit." "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise." And again: "Call upon me in the time of need, so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt praise me."

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